



POCKET PC Expert

Handheld computers are handy for documenting all your thoughts and plans – as long as you can easily record and store them. Steve Clack looks at the software provided and some add-ons that can help



1GHz POCKET PCs ON THE WAY

Following years of minor improvements, Pocket PC processors are to receive a major clock speed boost. Intel recently unveiled a 1.2GHz pre-production sample of the new Monahans processor, set to succeed the current XScale range.

According to Intel, a 1.0GHz Monahans is the most likely candidate for the first release early next year. Though likely to offer a significant speed boost over existing Pocket PC processors, the new generation of CPUs would be even faster were improved battery life not another key design goal.

BETTER TEXT RECOGNITION

If you're unable to persuade Pocket PC's built-in Transcriber to decipher your handwriting, PhatWare's new CalliGrapher 8 promises better text recognition, in addition to a number of other new features. As well as allowing you to write words directly onscreen, this version adds a completely new 'Write Pad' mode, which accepts input within a separate entry window at the bottom of the screen.

CalliGrapher 8 supports the new Windows Mobile 5 operating system, claims improved accuracy for both single letter and cursive (joined-up) handwriting via its new recognition engine, and improves accuracy by learning from the user's previous corrections. It costs \$40 (around £23) from www.phatware.com.

POCKET OPERA IN THE PIPELINE

The popular Opera web browser is already available for Windows Mobile Smartphone 2003 devices, but a Pocket PC version is now in development, with screenshots of pre-release software spotted on a number of websites.

Already well established on mobile phones, Symbian smartphones and desktop platforms, Opera 8 for Windows Mobile promises a fast, stable web browsing experience that's well optimised for Pocket PC screens, and will include full support for VGA resolution devices. Release details are yet to be confirmed. See www.opera.com for more.

There are plenty of clever things you can do with a Pocket PC, but one of the most fundamental uses of any PDA is to scribble down quick notes. They might be a few sentences of plain text, they might be a rudimentary map or diagram, or perhaps a combination of words and images. And what about voice notes? How easy is it to speak notes into your handheld and then retrieve them again later? Here's the lowdown on what you can do with the built-in Pocket PC software, and some decent add-on programs that are available.

EASY NOTES

The most obvious place for your scribbles is the built-in Notes application. Each individual note can store a single page of text and graphics drawn directly on the screen, plus any typing you enter via the usual onscreen keyboard, Transcriber, and other text-entry tools. You can also add as many voice recordings as you like to each note page and write a descriptive title next to each one. This combination of text, drawings and voice notes gives you plenty of flexibility for getting things down quickly in a meeting or brainstorming session.

By default, when you open a new note it will be ready to accept your onscreen scribbles, with a ruled display on the page. If you want to enter text rather than draw a sketch, tap on the highlighted yellow pen tool at the bottom of the screen to deselect it, then pop up the keyboard, Block Recogniser, Letter Recogniser or Transcriber and enter your text from there.

To add a voice recording, tap on the little cassette tape icon adjacent to it and you'll see a row of tape recorder-like audio controls at the bottom of the screen. Tap the circular red icon to start recording, then the square black icon to stop. Each new recording will be represented by a little loudspeaker icon within the note; just tap this to play back the recording, or tap next to it if you want to add some descriptive text.

If you normally enter plain text rather than scribbles, go to Tools, Options in the Notes file list view. Set the Default mode to Typing rather than Writing. You can also set up a variety of templates if you want to use Notes as a quick way to create phone memos, meeting notes and so on. You can also pick up any of the elements of your drawings and rescale them or drag them around the screen.

To do this, make sure the pen tool is deselected, then tap once on the required item to bring up a set of grab handles (the heavy black dots bounding the item). Click inside the handles to drag the graphic around the screen, or on one of the handles to stretch or reduce the image. If you click and hold on one of the circular grab handles you can drag the image to rotate it. This takes a little practice and can be very fiddly on small images, but it is quite a powerful feature.

Finally, if you choose to scrawl text into Notes in pen mode, your Pocket PC can try to convert it into typed text by choosing Recognize from the Tools menu. Your writing needs to be very tidy in order for it to be recognised accurately, so don't expect too much.

POCKET WORD

There's a lot of overlap between the functionality of Notes and Pocket Word. Although the features are a little more hidden, you can add scribbles and voice notes to Pocket Word in much the same way as with Notes, but with the added advantage that you can style your text with bold, italics, different font sizes, and other formatting.

There are also quite a few drawing tools, including the ability to use colour. Choose Writing, Drawing, Typing or Recording from Pocket Word's View menu to access all the extra features. Choose Writing for text that you want to have converted to typed text with the Recognize command and choose Drawing for making sketches.

BETTER NOTES

If you create a lot of scribbled notes, PhatPad (\$30, around £17, from www.phatware.com) is extremely powerful and efficient, but without the voice note facility. Each note can include multiple pages, and you can specify the page dimensions to create really big sketches. PhatPad uses digital ink technology, which cleverly smoothes out whatever you draw on the screen, making it uncannily like using a pencil on paper.

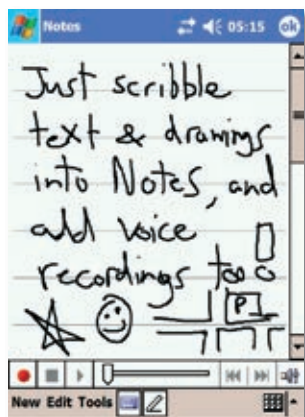
If you use it in conjunction with PhatWare's CalliGrapher, an improved replacement for Transcriber, you can have it automatically convert your scribbles to typed text, with much better – though still not infallible – accuracy.

Couple all this with a better set of shape-drawing tools and full colour support, and PhatPad is really the ultimate note-taking and doodling companion. It comes with a PC application for easy file import and export.

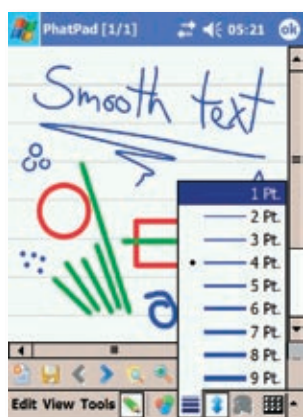
MAINLY TEXT

If you take masses of text notes and find it hard to keep them organised, try PhatNotes Lite (\$20, around £11, from www.phatware.com). This lets you store huge numbers of notes in separate databases and access them quickly using a sophisticated filtering and search system. You can link notes together, attach entire files to them, add voice recordings and send their contents via email. The array of features can be a little bewildering, but if you need this kind of power and organisational capability it's a great system.

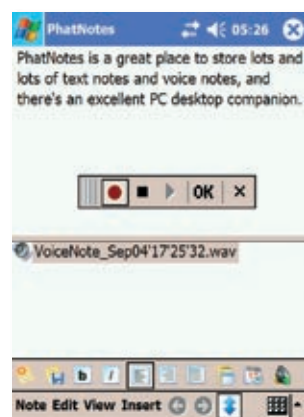
For an extra \$10 (around £6) you can buy PhatNotes Standard Edition, which synchronises with Microsoft Outlook's own notes, or for \$20



▲ Notes is surprisingly capable, and it's already built into every Pocket PC



▲ PhatPad is perfect if your notes contain a lot of sketches



▲ PhatNotes helps you organise an otherwise unmanageable pile of notes



▲ Voice-activated recording makes Resco Audio Recorder easy to operate

more the Professional Edition adds a complete companion application for your desktop PC.

DIGITAL DICTAPHONE

If you prefer to speak notes into your handheld rather than write them out, Resco Audio Recorder (\$20, from www.resco-net.com) is a power user's alternative to Notes. Beyond its slick interface is

voice-activated recording, so it will record only while you're speaking, rather than including silence. The program is highly configurable and it works as an MP3 music player too, though it lacks any audio control or bookmarking features. Great for organising long recordings, you can tag selected sections so they can be played back separately, deleted or resaved as separate named files. [CS](#)

CONTACT

POCKET PC EXPERT

If there is anything you would like to see covered in *Pocket PC Expert*, please contact us at the address below

pocketpc@computershopper.co.uk

REVIEW FILE MANAGER

RESCO Explorer 2005

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE \$25 (around £14)

DETAILS www.resco-net.com

If you use your Pocket PC a lot, you'll need to spend time managing your files and folders, much as you would with Windows Explorer on your PC desktop. The built-in File Explorer is good only for the most rudimentary housekeeping tasks, and although the freeware Total Commander (www.ghisler.com/ce.htm) is an improvement, for the ultimate file management experience it's worth splashing out on the latest Resco Explorer.

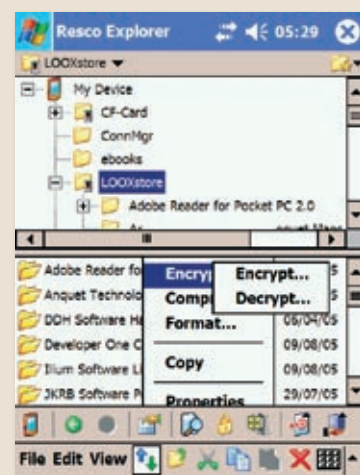
Now up to version 5.2, this mature product has absolutely everything you could wish for in a

file-manager program. You can configure it as you please, with a multi-pane interface that makes it easy to drag and drop files from place to place. You can also encrypt files, Zip them to save space or for sending as email attachments, and generally gain total control of what's on your Pocket PC and storage cards.

The latest version adds a Today screen plug-in to display your available memory and storage card status, and you can add icons for all your favourite programs and use it as your main application launcher. The beauty of Resco Explorer is that it's very powerful while remaining surprisingly easy to use. For serious Pocket PC users it's a must-have.

✓ The ultimate file-management tool

✗ Includes some features the average user will never need



▲ Resco's Explorer is the ultimate file manager for your Pocket PC

REVIEW FILE MANAGER

WEB INFORMATION SOLUTIONS Pocket Informant 2005

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE \$30 (around £17)

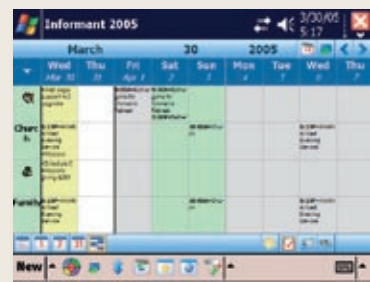
DETAILS www.pocketinformant.com/uk

If you find the standard Pocket PC organiser applications (Tasks, Calendar and Contacts) a little too basic, Pocket Informant 2005 is the answer. Recently given a major overhaul, this impressive application uses all your standard PIM data, synchronising perfectly with Microsoft Outlook,

but adds lots of extra ways to view and organise your appointments, addresses and to-do items. The bad news is that Pocket Informant now has over a dozen settings screens, which sounds very daunting, but the good news is that most, if not all, of these can be safely ignored until you feel the urge to explore further.

Aside from its fabulous interface, there are lots of productivity aids, such as quick-entry templates for your regular appointment types, clear colour-coding, the option to add icons to identify specific events, and the ability to move appointments and to-do items around with drag-and-drop ease.

It's easy to be put off by all the features on offer, but if you have a busy diary and a lot of contacts, Pocket Informant 2005 will pay rich dividends once you get to grips with its power.



▲ Try Pocket Informant if you crave a more flexible organiser

✓ An immensely powerful alternative to the built-in suite

✗ Huge feature list makes it a little daunting at first